

A Guide To...

Cholesterol



High cholesterol is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke. Here's what you need to know about the risks.

1. Men 45 years and older
2. Women 55 years and older
3. Family history of heart disease within the last two generations
4. High total cholesterol above 240 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dl)
5. Smoking
6. High blood pressure (hypertension)
7. Low HDL cholesterol concentration (below 40 mg/dl) confirmed by repeat measurement
8. High LDL cholesterol above 160 mg/dl
9. Diabetes
10. Overweight and obesity
11. Physical inactivity

Cholesterol Classifications and

When to Get Rechecked

R **Desirable:** < 200mg/dl* (recheck every 5 years)

Borderline High: 200-239 mg/dl (recheck yearly)

High: >240 mg/dl (recheck in 3 months)

*mg/dl = milligrams per deciliter

Frequently Asked Questions

What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a fatty wax-like substance made by the liver. It is necessary for most hormones, vitamin D, and bile. Our bodies make all the cholesterol they need.

Why should I care about my cholesterol level?

High cholesterol causes the hardening of the arteries, or narrowing and clogging of the blood vessels. The build up of cholesterol and fat in artery wall or blood vessels can decrease oxygen flow to the heart and cause heart attack and stroke which in turn can result in disability and death.

What are the "good" & "bad" cholesterol?

HDL cholesterol is the "good cholesterol" and carries the "bad" cholesterol to the liver to be broken down and removed from the body.

LDL cholesterol is the "bad" cholesterol. It carries cholesterol from the liver through the bloodstream, causing a build-up in the blood vessels.

What causes high cholesterol?

High blood cholesterol results from eating lots of high cholesterol foods and fats, or because the body naturally makes too much (a hereditary factor).

Which foods contain cholesterol?

Cholesterol comes only come from animal products or animal by-products such as beef, chicken, eggs, milk, etc.



How can I reduce my cholesterol level?

Live Tobacco Free

- Smokers' risk of heart attack is more than twice that of nonsmokers.
- Constant exposure to other people's smoke increases the risk of heart disease even for nonsmokers.
- Cigarette smoking acts with other risk factors to greatly increase the risk for heart disease. If you smoke, quit now!
- If you don't smoke, don't start.

Make Healthy Food Choices

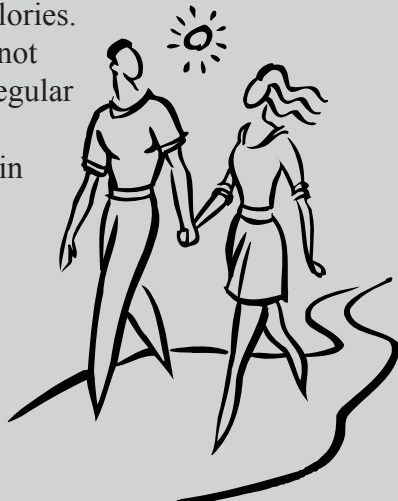
- Select foods from all major food groups.
- Consume at least 5 servings of vegetables and fruits every day.
- Include low-fat or fat free dairy products, fish, legumes, poultry and lean meats.
- Choose whole grain foods.

Be Physically Active

- Activities such as brisk walking, hiking, jogging, bicycling and swimming are especially good when you do them every day or 4-5 times a week.
- If you're just starting out, try walking for pleasure, gardening, and yard work.
- Recreational activities such as tennis, racquetball, soccer, or even dancing and housework can be good too.

Achieve a Healthy Body Weight

- Avoid excess intake of calories.
- Balance your calories by not overeating and getting regular exercise.
- Limit foods that are high in sugar and low nutritional quality, such as candy.



What are good food choices?

- 1.** Foods high in fiber, such as beans and peas, oatmeal, barley, whole wheat bread, wild and brown rice, apples, oranges, carrots, dried fruit, Raisin Bran, and All Bran
- 2.** Whole grain foods such as multigrain bread or muffins, black bean soup and brown rice pilaf
- 3.** Eat five to nine servings of fruits & vegetables each day
- 4.** Lowfat meats, poultry, fish & dairy products. Aim for at least 2 servings of fish a week
- 5.** Grilled, steamed, broiled or lightly stir-fried foods instead of fried
- 6.** Smaller portion sizes

Ways to add fiber

- 1.** Add fruit and nuts on top of a bowl of whole grain cereal.
- 2.** For a easy snack and energy boost, reach for a high-fiber treat such as popcorn, fresh fruit, raw vegetables, or nuts.
- 3.** "Fiberize" your cooking: swap up to one-third of the flour with old-fashioned oats when you bake.
- 4.** Add extra vegetables to casseroles, soups, salads and pasta dishes.
- 5.** Use brown rice instead of white rice.
- 6.** Check www.hearthighway.org for more tips and recipes.

